April 11, 2001

MEMORANDUM TO: Martin J. Virgilio, Director

Office of Nuclear Material Safety

and Safeguards

FROM: John T. Greeves, Director

or /RA/ L Camper for gement

Division of Waste Management Office of Nuclear Material Safety

and Safeguards

SUBJECT: EXPANDED ACCEPTANCE REVIEWS

In our recent briefing on the status of our reviews of license termination plans (LTPs), we identified several lessons learned. One of these lessons learned is that a limited technical review during the acceptance review would have resulted in the rejection of at least one recent LTP submission. Had this rejection occurred, we would have saved resources during the subsequent technical review. The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you of our plans to conduct expanded acceptance reviews of certain licensing submittals.

NMSS Policy and Procedures Letter (P&PL) 1-51, Rev 1, "Policy and Criteria for Initial Processing of Incoming Licensing Actions," states that an administrative review should be conducted within 30 days of receipt of a request for any licensing, certification, or registration action. The P&PL identifies the areas to be addressed in these reviews and states that it is expected that these reviews can be performed by administrative staff or a licensing assistant. Clearly such reviews are not designed to identify technical deficiencies. It has generally been our practice for the assigned Project Manager (PM) to conduct this review, which we have termed an "acceptance review." Because the PM generally conducts the acceptance review, technical issues can be identified. However, the 30-day time constraint limits the depth of the technical review. In addition, for complex licensing actions, such as license amendment requests involving the review of a decommissioning plan (DP) or a license termination plan (LTP), the PM does not have the requisite knowledge to identify technical deficiencies in all technical disciplines (e.g., health physics, hydrogeology, dose modeling, environmental monitoring, waste management, cost estimating, financial assurance, institutional controls, etc.). Therefore, significant technical deficiencies can go undetected until the complete technical review is underway. Significant deficiencies often lead to multiple requests for additional information thereby extending the review period and impacting the staff and contractor resources applied to the review. In addition, multiple RAIs and the resulting extended review schedule impact the review plans and resources available for other casework.

CONTACT: Robert Nelson, NMSS/DWM

(301) 415-7298

We have recently implemented several initiatives to improve the quality of DPs and LTPs. The recently published NUREG-1727, "NMSS Decommissioning Standard Review Plan," includes an acceptance review checklist as an appendix. In addition, the SRP suggests that the PM hold a meeting with the licensee before the DP is submitted to discuss the planned decommissioning and the approach that will be used to evaluate the DP. The attached excerpt from the SRP provides more information concerning this pre-submittal meeting. Finally, we are preparing a generic communication regarding recurring problems noted during recent DP and LTP reviews. We plan to issue this generic communication in June. However, until we have more experience with the implementation of these initiatives, we plan to implement an expanded acceptance review as discussed below.

The expanded acceptance review will only apply to license amendment requests involving the review of a DP or LTP. The period of time to complete the acceptance review will be expanded to a maximum of 90 days. The review will be conducted by a team led by the PM. The team will include staff with the requisite technical disciplines (e.g., health physics, hydrology, etc.). We are currently developing guidance to conduct the review. We plan to have this guidance developed before the next scheduled DP receipt in June of this year. The generic communication discussed above will address this new approach.

We believe that this approach will identify significant deficiencies early in the review process thereby obviating the application of expanded staff and contractor resources to the review of a poorly substantiated amendment request.

We request that P&PL 1-51 be revised to include expanded acceptance reviews for DPs and LTPs.

Attachment: NUREG-1727 Excerpt

M. Virgilio -2-

hold a meeting with the licensee before the DP is submitted to discuss the planned decommissioning and the approach that will be used to evaluate the DP. The attached excerpt from the SRP provides more information concerning this pre-submittal meeting. The first meeting of this type was held earlier this month. The feedback from both the PM and licensee was very positive. Finally, we are preparing a generic communication regarding recurring problems noted during recent DP and LTP reviews. We plan to issue this generic communication in April. However, until we have more experience with the implementation of these initiatives, we plan to implement an expanded acceptance review as discussed below.

The expanded acceptance review will only apply to license amendment requests involving the review of a DP or LTP. The period of time to complete the acceptance review will be expanded to a maximum of 90 days. The review will be conducted by a team led by the PM. The team will include staff with the requisite technical disciplines (e.g., health physics, hydrology, etc.). We are currently developing guidance to conduct the review. We plan to have this guidance developed before the next scheduled DP receipt in June of this year. The generic communication discussed above will address this new approach.

We believe that this approach will identify significant deficiencies early in the review process thereby obviating the application of expanded staff and contractor resources to the review of a poorly substantiated amendment request.

We request that P&PL 1-51 be revised to include expanded acceptance reviews for DPs and LTPs.

Attachment: NUREG-1727 Excerpt

This document should /_/ should not /X/ be made available to the PUBLIC ____RAN 4 / 11/01.
AN: ML010330081 TEMPLATE: NMSS-010

DISTRIBUTION: File Center DCB r/f NMSS r/f M.Weber E.Brach

D.Cool T.Essig C.Reamer DOCUMENT NAME: C:\accept-review.wpd

OFC	DCB	DCB	DWM		
NAME	R.Nelson	L.Camper	J.Greeves		
DATE	4 /11 /01	4 / 11 /01	4 / 12 /01	/ /00	/ /00

OFFICIAL RECORD COPY